



USS Blue Ridge

Family Gram Winter 2005



*A Tradition
of Excellence and Professionalism*

*In this issue:
Sailors of the Year Shine
Blue Ridge Sails Through LOA
Blue Ridge Honors Veterans
in Saipan*





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Blue Ridge families and friends,

Sitting down and writing to you has afforded me the opportunity to stop what I'm doing to reflect back and think about the goals our Sailors set and met throughout the past year.

We tackled the arduous environment and work-related challenges of an extended dry-dock maintenance period. Without missing a beat, the Blue Ridge team immediately transitioned to a multi-task effort of immense proportions: We moved the crew and staff back onboard the ship while simultaneously prepping for and blowing away our Light-Off Assessment (LOA).

From there it was smooth sailing. We spent a month doing what we do best. Supporting Seventh Fleet and steaming the Western Pacific. Our crew trained extensively and took advantage of the opportunity to sharpen their underway skills and qualifications.

It wasn't all work though. We had wonderful port visits to Sasebo, Japan; Okinawa, Saipan and Guam. Our Sailors enjoyed historical tours, shopping and participation in community relations projects and goodwill sporting events with our respective hosts.

In the New Year, we will build on these successes, embracing the challenges and opportunities ahead. There's no doubt in my mind that every Blue Ridge Sailor will rise to the occasion and serve as an ambassador of goodwill both here in Japan and the port of any country we might visit this year.

My request to you is simple. Please continue your valued support on the home front. Knowing our family and friends are well and thinking about us as we make America a safer, more prosperous and better country is very uplifting.

We serve in a tenuous operational and political environment in the Western Pacific, and are challenged by the unique aspects of serving overseas here in Japan. The combined effects of family separation and overseas duty can stress each of us to some degree. But having trusted friends that share mutual concerns can serve as a big benefit in helping each of us negotiate these challenges. If you would like to contribute ideas or just express interest in forming a support network founded upon friendship and concern for others, please consider becoming a member of the Blue Ridge Family Support Group. Mrs. Cheryl Galito, our Ombudsman has more details. She can be reached via e-mail at:

ombforblue_ridge@yahoo.com

It gives me great honor taking this opportunity to wish all of you a prosperous and enjoyable "Year of the Rooster." It has been my pleasure to work and associate with your Sailor throughout the year, and I look forward to another great year in 2005.

Warmest regards,

Captain J. Stephen Maynard



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Family and friends,

First of all, Happy New Year! I am very pleased to say that the Blue Ridge family enjoyed a happy holiday season. Everybody who took time off or left the area to spend the holidays with family and friends returned to Blue Ridge safely and recharged to attack the challenges and adventures that await us in 2005.

Looking back on 2004, I can tell you that every member of the Blue Ridge team performed at an outstanding level; one that makes me very proud to be your Sailor's Command Master Chief. Whether on the sports field, "getting it done" in their respective divisions or preparing for shipboard qualifications and inspections; every Blue Ridge Sailor stepped up and delivered.

In fact, I'd be remiss if I didn't mention several of our warriors who went above and beyond the scope of their duties and responsibilities. I'd like to recognize EN2 (SW) Brian Metzger and MM3 (SW) Jonathon Sarmiento as the Blue Ridge Senior and Junior Sailors of the 4th Quarter respectively.

After the Sailor of the Quarter competition wrapped up, our command leadership was charged with a difficult task. We had to look at all of our hard charging Sailors of 2004 and decide who our top-performing Sailors of the year were. Make no mistake, competition was fierce and the decision was a difficult one! My heartiest congratulations go to IT2 (SW) Richard Kendle and CTT1 (SW/AW) Jasen Williams for their selection as Blue Ridge Junior Sailor of the Year and Sailor of the Year respectively.

As you read this newsletter, we are already underway and enjoying our first deployment of 2005. With that we expect many opportunities and challenges ahead. Please keep us all in your thoughts as we represent you, our Navy and the United States throughout the western Pacific.

Sincerely,

Anthony Knight
Command Master Chief
USS Blue Ridge (LCC-19)





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Blue Ridge Sailor of the Year

Cryptologist Technician (Technical) First Class (Surface/ Aviation Warfare) Jase Williams of Blue Ridge's Operations department dedicated a big part 2004 helping others. In 2005, he can bask in the glory of his selection as USS Blue Ridge's (LCC-19) "Sailor of the Year".

"I was overwhelmed when I heard my name called over the IMC as the "Senior Sailor of the Year," said the Birmingham, Al. native. "This has been my most memorable moment aboard the ship."

CTT1(SW/AW) Williams, leading petty officer of the Operational Warfare (OW) division, enlisted ten years ago in order to become more responsible, but was unsure about the choice he made about his career as an Electronics Warfare Technician (EW).

"I joined the navy for discipline, so I enlisted to gain some," said Williams. "The reason I chose my rate because the A school was in Pensacola, Fla."

Early on in his enlistment, Williams has learned the importance of his job as well as many other things.

"Since choosing this rate, I have learned many things. Since merging with the Cryptologist rate, I can now do things I couldn't before just as an EW," said Williams. "I now have the opportunity to work with more electronic warfare systems, and I also have more shore duty billets to choose from."

Though Williams has a busy schedule which includes community relations (COMREL) programs, he always makes sure his junior personnel are getting their qualifications.

CTT3 Natasha Langenback of OW division, say CTT1 Williams is always there for advice and to test her knowledge before she goes to take an exam.

"He teaches you a lot, but it's not just about our rate. It's about the Navy as a whole" said Langenback. "He quizzes us, makes sure we are prepared before we take any test whether it is for advancement or shipboard qualifications."

Williams is pressing on with his military career. He believes this award will help in the long run, but is enjoying his time onboard and taking things as they come.

"I take things one day at a time. I have had a good time on this ship and I enjoy the people I work with," he said. "I hope they gain something from me as I have gained from them."



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Blue Ridge Junior Sailor of the Year

USS Blue Ridge (LCC-19) recently named Information Systems Technician 2nd Class (Surface Warfare) Richard Kendle as the 2004 Junior Sailor of the Year.

Kendle, a native of Bellaire, Ohio said he is thankful for the recognition from the ship and hopes that this award will help him in and out of the Navy.

"Being selected as Junior Sailor of the Year means a lot to me," said Kendle. "It feels good to be noticed for the hard work that I have put in."

Information Systems Technician 1st Class (SW) Jannett King, Kendle's leading petty officer, said even as a 3rd Class, Kendle was setting the standard in his division.

"Even as an IT3, his limits and capabilities weren't based on pay grade or even knowledge," said King, a Miami native. "He was continuously striving to improve himself professionally and undertake any responsibilities."

Kendle has become one of only four qualified Joint Information Processing Center (JIPC) supervisors, managing an eight person watch section.

He has also earned a Navy Achievement Medal (NAM) and a Good Conduct Award, but his leadership extends far beyond the confines of the LAN shop. He has brought his good will to the community of Yokosuka.

"His devotion to helping people in his spare time is what is so remarkable," said King. "IT2 is an active volunteer in Life is For Everyone, or LIFE youth group at the Yokosuka Chapel of Hope."

He is also a volunteer for Lighthouse, a missionary organization by Cadence International, used to spread Gospel to military members around the world.

Kendle feels this award will not only benefit his naval career, but will also help if he chooses to pursue employment outside the US Navy.

"I believe that this award will not only help me get priority orders, but it will also look good on me when I get out into the civilian sector," he said.



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Blue Ridge Sails Through Light Off Assessment

By Journalist Seaman Marc Rockwell-Pate



YOKOSUKA, Japan (INPORT) – USS Blue Ridge (LCC 19) recently cleared the first of several hurdles that determine when the ship is ready and able to do what it does best; serve as the flagship for Commander, U.S. Seventh Fleet. After an arduous six-month Dry-Dock Selected Restricted Availability, the Blue Ridge crew came together and aggressively attacked and successfully completed an intense Light Off Assessment (LOA).

“This ship was extremely well prepared and organized for this assessment,” said Capt. Bill Haflich, Director of Engineering Training for Afloat Training Group (ATG) Pacific. “The engineering spaces were bright and orderly, and it remains the cleanest steam plant in the Pacific.”

Ships that are in the industrial confined of dry-dock for more than 90 days are required to undergo an LOA. This engineering inspection determines whether or not a ship can safely “light off” its boilers. The assessment consists of three important areas; material condition assessment, main space firefighting capabilities and programming/administration inspection.

“All three of these parts of the assessment are vital to the ships sea worthiness,” said Lt. Cmdr. Charles Brock, an ATG Pacific materials inspector. “If the engine room is dirty, then you’re not going to be running efficiently. If your paperwork (programming/administration) isn’t intact, then that is probably evidence that the plant is not running properly, and every ship has to be able to fight a main space fire.”

On day one of the three day assessment, the inspectors did the material and programming/administration assessments of the engine room. The inspectors looked for any damage to machinery, checked pressure gauges and reviewed training records and fuel oil quality logs for correct entries and periodicity. Normally this portion of an LOA inspection takes a day and a half. According to Brock, Blue Ridge’s good teamwork and preparation helped accelerate the process.

“The inspection is ahead of schedule due to good organization and engineering knowledge, said the Milwaukee, Wis., native. “Everyone from the Engineering Officer to the fireman in the main space is doing their job right.”

On the second day of the assessment, the crew performed a mock main space fire scenario. At approximately 1 p.m. the one bravo boiler experienced a major fuel leak of 30 gallons of fuel. Inspectors were stationed throughout the ship, observing and grading the crew’s performance as the scenario played out.

To an outsider looking in, watching a ship’s crew react to a main space fire might resemble orchestrated chaos. However, weeks of preparation and drill scenarios helped ensure the inspection drill was a success, proving that training turns potential into performance.



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"It was really no big surprise that the drill went well," said Damage Controlman Second Class (Surface Warfare) Ivoe Nicholson, who serves as the On Scene Leader for Repair Locker 5. "Everyone in our locker was very prepared. Repair 5 is mostly Engineers who are very experienced and used to high speed environments."

"The whole crew really played a pivotal role through the fire drill to help the ship achieve this significant accomplishment," said Capt. J. Stephen Maynard, Blue Ridge commanding officer. "Everybody really performed well and was led by an outstanding Engineering Department."

Day three of the assessment consisted of an early morning meeting between ATG Pacific inspectors and Blue Ridge leadership to discuss the assessment of the ship. Before the ship was given a "green light" for lighting off, discrepancies that the inspectors found had to be corrected.

"There is always going to be something wrong on the ship in these assessments," said Brock. "We're just here to find the discrepancies the ship does have so that the crew can fix them."

Immediately following his out brief with the inspection team and learning that Blue Ridge was once again certified to light off boilers, Capt. Maynard expressed his pleasure and pride as he congratulated his Sailors over the ship's announcing system. After addressing the crew, Maynard made his way down to the engineering plant and watched the first boiler being lit, completing of the first chapter in Blue Ridge's book of life after DSRA.

"The process of getting this ship back into operational status is difficult, but my crew has handled the first step with great professional skill," said Maynard. "It's unbelievable to think that the main engine was being put together only a few weeks ago."

"Blue Ridge is a national treasure," Capt. Haflich said. "I think that she just gets better with age."





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Blue Ridge Returns to Sea Following Maintenance Period

ABOARD USS BLUE RIDGE, at sea – After seven months of hard work by her Sailors and Yokosuka Ship Repair Facility workers, the Seventh Fleet command ship USS Blue Ridge (LCC 19) got underway Oct. 25 for a scheduled underway period.

Blue Ridge's commanding officer, Capt. J. Stephen Maynard, declared "being in the Navy is about one thing, and that is being at sea, combat ready, and the Blue Ridge is back in business."

Maynard went on to explain he is very pleased with the crew's underway performance so far.

"My biggest surprise is that we have maintained a great deal of our proficiency, even though we still have a way to go to become fully proficient, I know that the crew performance will be top notch," said Maynard.

Maynard credits his crew for the high standards they maintained during the summer dry dock availability.

"I want the crew to know that they did it right this summer, and they should be proud to wear the Blue Ridge ball cap," said Maynard.

During the dry dock availability a number of new Sailors reported to Blue Ridge, and for many of these Sailors, fresh to the fleet, it was their first at-sea experience.

Yeoman Seaman Apprentice Brandon P. Booker, from Albany, Ind., said once Blue Ridge got underway, he finally felt as if he was really in the Navy.

"I have been preparing to get underway since boot camp, and when I checked in during dry dock it did not feel like I was really in the Navy," said Booker. "I look forward to visiting all of the places that I would have never gotten to see if I was not in the Navy."

Booker added that during the underway period, he wants to start working on his Enlisted Surface Warfare Specialist qualification.

For some new Sailors, such as Lithographer's Mate Seaman Charles E. Newcomer from Jacksonville, Fla., it is an exciting time in his new Navy career.





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“For me, it is an experience that most people don’t have, visiting foreign ports while serving in the Navy,” said Newcomer. “I feel very fortunate to be serving aboard the Blue Ridge in Japan.”

USS Blue Ridge is a Blue Ridge-class amphibious command ship. As the flag ship for Commander, U.S. Seventh Fleet, Blue Ridge provides the highest quality capability for seagoing command and control of theater level forces by naval and joint commanders during peacetime or conflict and provides preeminent naval support for U.S. diplomatic initiatives and objectives. Blue Ridge is 620 feet long, 82 feet wide, and displaces 19,290 tons fully loaded. The ship can reach speeds of 23 knots and has a complement of 620 ship’s company and approximately 240 staff personnel.





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Blue Ridge, U.S. 7th Fleet Honor Veterans Day in Saipan

By Journalist 2nd Class Luke D. Johnson, USS Blue Ridge Public Affairs

GARAPAN, Saipan (NNS) — While in port, USS Blue Ridge (LCC 19) and U.S. 7th Fleet honored veterans from wars past and present in a Veterans Day ceremony Nov. 11 at American Memorial Park in Garapan, Saipan.

Blue Ridge Commanding Officer Capt. J. Stephen Maynard was the keynote speaker for the ceremony. Maynard observed that American Memorial Park was the ideal setting to honor Veterans Day.

“We could not have a more appropriate venue than the American Memorial Park Court of Honor, situated in the very location where the service of our veterans was so important in June 1944, as a decisive battle of the World War II’s Pacific offensive was waged,” stated Maynard.

Maynard went on to say that it is important to always remember those who have served our country in time of war.

“Tradition is at the core of today’s holiday - the tradition of service, the tradition of sacrifice and the tradition of commitment,” Maynard said. “These traditions are perpetuated from generation to generation by remembering those who came before us and truly lived out the values - duty, honor and country.”

Maynard also reflected on the new generation of war veterans who are currently fighting the war on terrorism.

“And today, we look to our young volunteers waging a global war on terrorism, from the Marine rifleman on patrol, the Air Ordnance man on deck, to the Fireman on watch in the fire room. Our young men and women are on duty, on watch, fighting, protecting our freedom, and bringing the promise of a better life to millions throughout the world,” Maynard added. “I am proud and humbled to serve with them. They are our veteran heroes of tomorrow.”

Maynard concluded his speech with reflection on all who have served, and the sacrifices they made.

“Let us then reflect on their sacrifices, and make this a day to say thank you for their patriotism, their love of country and most of all, their willingness to serve the common good,” said Maynard.

The governor of the Commonwealth of Northern Mariana Islands, Jean N. Babuata, was grateful for the support that Blue Ridge and U.S. 7th Fleet provided to make the ceremony a success.





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"It is always great to have Blue Ridge come visit Saipan, and having the captain as keynote speaker is appreciated very much," said Babuata.

The governor added that having Blue Ridge and U.S. 7th Fleet participate in the ceremony made it a special occasion for the veterans of Saipan. He also went on to state that the citizens of Saipan are proud of and support their military.

"We are probably the most patriotic territory in the nation, and we support our troops worldwide," said Babuata.

During the ceremony, Babuata presented some of the last surviving veterans of the campaign, who ousted the Japanese from Saipan, with certificates and coins.

Gregorio C. Labrera, a former corporal in the Marine Corps, said he was honored to have been part of the liberation of Saipan more than 60 years ago, and he expressed gratitude to Blue Ridge and U.S. 7th Fleet Sailors for participating in the ceremony.

"I am very happy to see the Sailors here honoring the veterans here in Saipan," said Labrera.

At the conclusion of the ceremony, the U.S. 7th Fleet Band played Anchor's Aweigh and the Marine's Hymn, and the crowd clapped loudly to the music to show its support for both Blue Ridge and U.S. 7th Fleet, and to honor the veterans in Saipan who served honorably.

Blue Ridge is the command ship for Commander, U.S. 7th Fleet. The ship provides the highest-quality capability for seagoing command-and-control of theater-level forces by naval and/or joint commanders during peacetime or conflict, and provides preeminent naval support for U.S. diplomatic initiatives and objectives.





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USS Blue Ridge earns second consecutive “Golden Anchor”



By Journalist Seaman Apprentice Marc Rockwell-Pate

YOKOSUKA, Japan – USS Blue Ridge (LCC 19) was recently named as a back-to-back recipient of the Commander, U.S. Pacific Fleet Retention Excellence Award. By winning the award two years in a row, Blue Ridge has proven itself as a leader in retention. Quarter Master 3rd Class Steve Lunneborg, of Albuquerque, N.M., raises the Retention Excellence Award pennant aboard USS Blue Ridge (LCC 19). The pennant shows signs of wear because the ship has earned the right to raise it every day for the past two years. Blue Ridge recently won its second consecutive Retention Excellence Award, setting some of the highest retention marks in the Pacific Fleet. Blue Ridge is forward deployed to Yokosuka, Japan.

“It has been a wonderful honor to win the Retention Excellence Award,” said Blue Ridge Commanding Officer, Capt. J. Stephen Maynard. “I think it says a lot about the command’s concern as a whole for the individual Sailor.”

Before a command is considered for the Retention Excellence Award, also known as the “Golden Anchor,” it must measure up to several standards. Every command is judged on two main criteria: retention percentage and an annual assessment. Retention percentages are broken down into three main zones; Zone A (Sailors with up to six years of service), Zone B (6-10 years service) and Zone C (10-14 years service).

During fiscal year 2004, Blue Ridge had to retain at least 56 percent of Zone A Sailors, 70 percent of Zone B Sailors and 85 percent of Zone C Sailors to win the award. The ship not only met this requirement, but exceeded last year’s efforts by retaining 70 percent of Zone A Sailors, 85 percent of those in Zone B and 100 percent in Zone C. Nearly 75 percent of all eligible Sailors onboard re-enlisted in 2004.

Blue Ridge also shined in the area of attrition, which can make or break a command’s Zone A percentages. Attrition applies to Sailors who are unable to fulfill their Navy obligations. The ship sported a nine percent attrition rate, half of the 18 percent maximum set by Pacific Fleet. Chief Navy Counselor (SW/AW) Charles Traufler, Blue Ridge’s command career counselor, said the Blue Ridge’s re-enlistment and low attrition rate successes extends beyond his office.

“A lot of the success we have had has to do with command leadership,” he said. “All I do is maintain the administrative and technical sides of it (the retention program), they are the ones who are talking to the Sailors and bringing the Sailors to me for counseling.”



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Maynard said not only is he impressed with the ship's career counseling staff, but he is also inspired and thankful for the award-winning efforts displayed by the rest of the crew.

"It's not just the ship's career counselors, the Captain or the XO that make all this possible," said Capt. Maynard. "It starts with divisional career counselors, petty officers and right on up to the Chief's Mess. It's about knowing your Sailors dreams, aspirations and expectations they have for the Navy, and my Chiefs and petty officers know that about their people."

Blue Ridge Sailor's Proud to Reenlist and Serve Their Country





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Engineering Department



The Engineering Department has once again proven itself a cut above the rest, and has tackled every conceivable challenge with tact and an uncompromising professionalism. Engineering Department has maintained the highest of standards, in order that the BLUE RIDGE is always ready to support the mission of the Commander Seventh Fleet. A lot of hard work and extended hours by the Engineers have gone into making the BLUE RIDGE the finest Command Ship of the Pacific Fleet.

The Engineering Department performed flawlessly during the Seventh Fleet Staff exercise TERMINAL FURY. A Division was kept busy during the exercise by keeping the hot water flowing through out the ship and

maintaining the BLUE RIDGE renowned Five Star Service. E, A, and R Divisions were also kept busy by answering over 300 trouble calls in 10 days.

During TERMINAL FURY, A and E Divisions also performed vital repairs to the SSDG and also groomed the electrical plant as well. Both divisions received some assistance with these tasks from the folks from SRF and NAVSSES. Those who chose not to take leave during the holiday season worked for 4 days straight doing testing to the SSDG and lighting off the boilers in to support this critical check.

In keeping with the spirit of the holiday season, E Division decorated the entire ship with a festive lighting scheme, and the BLUE RIDGE was most spirited, festive ship on the Yokosuka water front.

R Division has been extremely busy doing the ever important task of imparting their DC knowledge to the rest of the crew. R Division has been busy ensuring that the BLUE RIDGE crew is always ready to fight the ship at any moment. They are currently revamping the damage control training process so that ship is always at its highest level of DC readiness.

B Division has been diligently getting the BLUE RIDGE Fire Room to the highest state of material readiness. B Division has also put safety first by bringing several thousand gallons of fuel with zero mishaps.

M Division strives to keep every piece of engineering equipment at 100%. They are currently working with SRF on the evaporators to ensure that BLUE RIDGE is making the maximum amount of water for her crew.



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Engineering is ready to take on the challenges that await BLUE RIDGE in our upcoming underway period, and the engineers aboard BLUE RIDGE devotion to duty and professionalism is second to none.

Re-enlisted: MM3 Nageotte, EM3 (SW) Ferrel, EM3 Dador, MM2(SW) McCormick, MM3 Biason, MR2 Woodard, MR2 Tregear, HT3 Marr

Promoted: MM2 Arzadon, EN3 Brooks, DC3 Hejl, EN3 Casillas, EN3 Howard, HT1 (SW) Holmes, EM3 Kehoe, EM2 Sarmogenes, MM1 (SW) O'Neal, MM3 Perry, EM3 Rhodes, MM1 (SW) Sato, DC3 Spangler, EM3 Zhao





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Deck Department

Deck Department has maintained the ship in excellent material condition, and ensured Blue Ridge looked immaculate for the embarkation of our distinguished guests during TERMINAL FURY in December. A lot of hard work and extended hours have been logged by Deck personnel, who all deserve a hearty Bravo Zulu for their efforts.

Congratulations are in order for BM3 Burkhalter and BM3 Chan, who were advanced to Boatswain's Mate Third Class through the Command Advancement Program (CAP). They consistently showcased their hard work, loyalty, and leadership skills, and they were rewarded with a well-deserved promotion.



Final installation of the new RHIB davit systems has been completed, and Deck has conducted several successful training evolutions utilizing them. A vast improvement over the old PL and Captain's Gig launching systems which used to be on the starboard side, the RHIB's can be launched more quickly and are faster and more reliable. As a result, Deck's boat crews have set new ship records for recovery time. Our boat qualified sailors, led by top coxswain BM2 Cantey, participated in a Force Protection exercise with ATG, helping to hone our stand-off tactics in preparation for the upcoming ATP evaluation.

First Division has been busy with the upkeep and preservation of their divisional spaces. The forecastle looks fantastic, due in large part to BM1(SW) Naval, who displayed his in-rate pride by designing a section of non-skid in the shape of the Boatswain's Mate crossed anchors.

Second Division repainted Aft Mooring and continues to beautify the main deck. Every inch of non-skid on the main deck will be revitalized before the ship's winter deployment, ensuring that future big tops will continue to impress our foreign guests and dignitaries.

Third Division was hard at work in the weeks leading up to December's TERMINAL FURY exercise getting the ship's ceremonial areas in top condition for the arrival of our distinguished guests. They repainted the Miser Tower and Superstructure, as well as the entire starboard side and waterline. The Admiral's Barge is looking better than ever, with the interior cabins receiving a total renovation, and work is still being conducted to remodel the rest of the Admiral's Barge.

Deck Department is excited to welcome aboard the new ship's Bos'n, CWO3 Turner, who is reporting aboard from duty on our sister ship, USS MOUNT WHITNEY. He already knows the ship's layout very well, and his knowledge and expertise will be a great asset for the department.

Deck Department is geared up and ready for the ship's upcoming winter deployment. With several demanding Sea & Anchor evolutions and a plethora of important Big Tops, Deck Department is poised to shine in support of COMSEVENTHFLT operations.



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Combat Systems



In just a few short months, Combat Systems Department has once again proven its steadfast commitment to its mission of supporting the Seventh Fleet Staff. After successfully completing an arduous and lengthy dry dock period, to include successfully re-embarking the COMSEVENTHFLT Staff one month ahead of schedule, the department focused on starting the training cycle and preparing for the major exercise Terminal Fury. The training efforts of both the Combat Systems Training Team (CSTT) and watchstanders were doubled up on the recent underway due to only having a limited time at-sea to train. Two general quarters drills per day, plus additional training kept everyone extremely busy. The sailors were equal to the task at hand, and the outcome of the first outside assessment, CART II, conducted by inspectors from ATG WESTPAC was a resounding success. In fact, the inspectors noted, "this is the first time a FDNF ship's watch teams have received scores of 'A' and completed 'all' of the enabling objectives at the start of the training cycle." This was all made possible by resolute teamwork and an unwavering commitment to both training and learning. Well done to all involved!

The Combat Systems Department could only revel in their great success for a short time due to another rapidly approaching event Terminal Fury '05. The next mission in sight was what BLUE RIDGE was designed to do, support a fully embarked joint staff with the capability of planning, directing, and fighting a war on the beach from the sea. Preparing for this embarkation was no small task. The team worked extra hours around the Thanksgiving Holiday and right up to the start of the Terminal Fury Exercise. All the planning, preparation and hard work resulted in one of the best exercises ever hosted onboard BLUE RIDGE. The JTF519 Staff commended the ship's outstanding cleanliness, superior hospitality, state-of-the-art equipment, and unyielding dedication to customer service.

Lieutenant Junior Grade Reisinger successfully completed his tour onboard and was bade a farewell during the month of November to continue his Navy career while sunbathing on the white sandy beaches of Hawaii. His calm, yet undeniably professional style was an integral part of the Combat Systems Department and the entire Wardroom. Though laidback, he was one of the most seasoned Officers of the Deck (OOD) who imparted knowledge to those working on their qualifications. He meticulously helped to lead the BLUE RIDGE's Weapons Division as well as the Anti-Terrorism and Force Protection efforts into the ever-changing post September 11th climate. He was relieved by LTJG Gavin who came to the department full of new energy and ideas to inject into the Force Protection watch teams. Another recent check-in to department is Ensign Byrne who as the George of the department (Navy tradition calls the most junior Ensign the "George") will be assisting the Electronics Materials Officer (EMO) as the Radar and Line Of Sight Officer (RLOSO).

CSE Division performed at an all-time high over the last several months. They successfully completed the upgrade to the GIG-E LAN which included removal and re-installation over 50 miles of CAT-5 network cable and the distribution of over 1200 computer assets as part of an overall computer refresh. The division was recognized on numerous occasions for providing



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seamless SATCOM communications in support of the Terminal Fury exercise, installing multiple new network drops, repairing numerous systems that saved the ship thousands of dollars, and once again allowing the embarked staff to complete their mission by providing around the clock immediate assistance. The C4I systems performed flawlessly and achieved an all time high of greater than 99% reliability for the duration of the exercise.

CSF Division was very busy with gun shoots and weapons training. Both new CIWS mounts installed during DSRA have successfully shot PACFIRES underway. The division also fired over 26,000 rounds of small arms ammunition and 3,000 rounds of CIWS. The time spent on the range resulted in qualifying just over 325 people on the 9mm Beretta, M-14 Rifle, M60 Machine Gun, .50 Cal Machine Gun, and 25MM Chain Gun.

CSI Division has had an extraordinarily busy fall season, with numerous evolutions demanding their attention. In addition to routine maintenance and trouble calls, the IC shop added C4I systems testing, DSRA work items, Aviation Certification, and COMSEVENTHFLT Staff exercise support to their busy workload. Amidst preparations for exercise Terminal Fury, they installed new high-end Surround-Sound Systems in all Enlisted Berthing lounge areas, providing a well-deserved boost to their shipmates' quality of life.

From the Master-At-Arms Division, recent changes to the Uniform Regulations resulted in an increased awareness and efforts to enforce these standards. In addition, the MAA's were an essential part of the embarkation of over 500 military personnel in support of Terminal Fury '05. Their steadfast appearance gave assurance to the embarkees that their safety was the number one priority.

CBS "Sayonara": Fair Winds and Following Seas to the following shipmates: LTJG Reisinger, ET3 Hebenstreit, LN2 Dittebrand, FC3 Furphy, ET2 Seals, ET2 Smith, FC2 Johnson.

CBS "Welcome Aboard": LTJG Gavin, ENS Byrne, FC2 Molina, ET3 Wieland, ET3 Cervantes, ET2 Thomas, ET3 King, ET2 Marou, GM1 Tavai.

CBS "Award Spotlight": Good Conduct- IC3 Cogswell, ET3 Knott, ETCS Galito

CBS "Advancement": IC2 Wynn, IC2 Howard, IC2 Launay, IC2 Herr, FC3 Furphy, ET2 Canales, ET2 Thomas, and ET2 Caguin.

CBS "Birthdays": LTJG Gavin, ENS Byrne, FC3 Bayot, ET3 Canales, FC2 Johnson, IC3 Herr, ET3 McCoy, GM3 Wainz, IC3 Clark, ET3 Pepper, ET2 Thompson, IC1 Fernandez, ET2 Marchese, ET3 Boyd, ET2 Felmlee.

CBS "Family Affairs": Congratulations to GM3 Wainz whose daughter, Jasmine, was born in early September.

Now the Department is shifting its focus toward the next deployment and making preparations for the COMSEVENTHFLT staff's impending multi-national exercises in the spring and summer months. The Combat Systems Department continues to set the standard and will continue raising the bar even higher by the time the next quarter rolls around. From everyone in Combat Systems we wish you and yours a Happy Holiday!





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Supply Department

Supply Department had a challenging quarter as we transitioned from the difficult 6-month DSRA period and made preparations for underway operations at sea. Over the last three months, our major “show” came in early December when hundreds of officers and enlisted personnel from the Air Force, Army, Navy, and Marine Corps boarded USS Blue Ridge for the annual Fleet Exercise Terminal Fury. This exercise required the best efforts in terms of service and support from the Supply Department, as we were the center of focus for quality of life issues for these personnel – our services of messing, berthing, laundry, barbershop, vending, ship’s store, and disbursing support played key elements in the overall success of the exercise. During the last three months, we also had visits from the ATG Food Management Team, the ATG Limited Training Team, and the Commander Navy Regional Southwest Audit Team, all of which are standard inspections for Supply.



The General Stores Division (S-1) opened the new fiscal year with the extremely tedious task of rearranging its seven storerooms and completing inventories on its 8,000 plus line items of repair parts onboard. So far, the process has gone well, however, this will be an ongoing process for the division as it makes way to present “showcase” storerooms for the upcoming Supply Management Assessment scheduled for later this year. In addition to the inventories, S-1 provided outstanding logistical support for the four ports we visited over the period – Sasebo, Okinawa, Saipan, and Guam. Finally, logistical support for exercise Terminal Fury proved to be a challenge for the division, as there were many urgent requirements for high visibility parts and supplies to keep the ship’s equipment up-and-running and the services flowing smoothly in support of exercise Terminal Fury.

The Food Service Division (S-2) put its best on display several times during the quarter by conducting special meals for VADM (JMSDF) Nakashima’s visit, the ATG Food Management Team Visit, Thanksgiving Dinner, and Christmas Dinner. These meals went extremely well and were much appreciated by the crew. In addition to the special meals, the division had to support hundreds of additional enlisted embarkees that came onboard in support of the Terminal Fury exercise, as well as its everyday three meals a day 5-star service. The ATG Navy Food Management Team was onboard 25-28 October for an assist visit to train CSs in their culinary skills –including food preparation, display, menu review, and other topics such as sanitation standards, record keeping, and new trends and developments in the world of food service. In preparation for the ATG LTT visit in late October, a quarterly wall-to-wall inventory was completed with an outstanding 99.46 validity percentage.

The Sales and Service Division (S-3) has gone through some changes as it has been implementing new ways to improve services for our customers onboard the ship. Due to the low volume of sales in the Geedunk Store, the decision was made to close the Geedunk Store and transfer its inventory over to the main Ship’s Store. With the closure and transfer of the Geedunk Store, there was a corresponding decision to extend hours in the Ship’s Store. This change will be a “win-win” solution for both the crew and the SHs as it will provide for better use of manning, better sales volume per hour of operation, more service hours to the crew, and ultimately, better funding for the ship’s MWR program.



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The Disbursing Support Operation (S-4) has done well, providing steady outstanding customer support from their newly renovated disbursing office. The highlight from this period included the successful completion of the Commander Navy Regional Southwest audit on 21 October with an overall score of 1.91 out of 2.00 points— an “Outstanding.”

The Wardroom/Billeting operation (S-5) had the unique challenge of feeding and berthing over 300 Officers, who came aboard for the Terminal Fury Fleet Exercise from 02 December through 12 December. These were primarily Air Force personnel, so the challenge occurred in providing services tailored to their limited experience onboard Navy Ships. The planning and coordination for the exercise started many months in advance for S-5, as the division coordinated with C7F Admin to prepare Welcome Aboard packages, coordinate stateroom billeting plans, prepare over 150 staterooms, and plan special services to our guests.

Supply Department continues with its philosophy of 5-star customer service excellence through respect, honesty, professionalism, and teamwork. As always, we look forward with pride and anticipation of the challenging, yet extremely awarding challenges that lay ahead.

Personnel Highlights

Job Well Done to DK1(SW) Blankers and CS3 Yoder for their selection as the Supply Department’s Senior Sailor of the Quarter and Junior Sailor of the Quarter for 4th Quarter, Calendar Year 2004, respectively.

Congratulations to the following personnel who were advanced with the recent advancement cycle:

S1:

SK2 (SW) Villahermosa
SK3 Jones
SK3 Gatbonton
PC3 Hill

S2:

CS1 (SW) Delacruz
CS3 Mikan
CS3 Cristobal
CS3 Seguramatinez
CS3 Mortis
CS3 Moore
CS3 Greathouse

S3:

SH3 Carey
SH3 Farrington
SH3 Copeland

S5:

CS2 (SW) Rangel
CS3 Poore
CS3 Frick
CS3 Harris
OS3 Branigan (TAD as FSA)
EM3 Zhao (TAD as FSA)
IT3 Fisher (TAD as FSA)

Welcome Aboard:

CSC(SW) Pilapil
SK1(SW) Joven
SK2(SW) King
SH2 Borromeo
CSSN Brown
CSSR Pardo
CSSR Powell
CSSR Sanagustin
CSSR Antoine
SHSA Marshall

We bid a fond farewell to these shipmates:

CSC(SW) Najera
CS1(SW) Alejo
SK2(SW) Gonzalezzarazua
SK2(SW) Rasavong





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Communications Department

Welcome Aboard

ENS Mascolo
CWO2 Bell
ITC Conyers
ITSN Lais
IT2 Kivlehan
ITSN Fisher
ITSN Ammons 2
IT2 Pagulayan
ITSN Fenby
ITSN Lummus
ITSN NG
IT2 Smilowitz

Farewell

IT2 Villalobos
IT2 Moore, C.
IT2 Brown, L.
IT1 Porcelli
IT3 DeMasi
IT2 Udoh
IT2 Davis, J.



The Communications Department had a very active quarter. After moving back on the ship following the Dry Dock Ships Restricted Availability (DSRA), the new Network Operations Center came to life, bringing with it an updated network and department designed to better serve Blue Ridge and the embarked staff.

Overcoming the hiccups and trials of introducing an updated Network; complete with a new backbone, switches, routers and operating system; Communications Department rose to the challenge and made a very smooth transition as they brought the ship's network capabilities back to life.

The department also underwent a major reorganization when the Joint Information Processing Center (JIPC) and Local Area Network (LAN) shops were combined to form the new Network Operations Center (NOC), which is divided into three inner divisions; Network Support, Network Security and Tactical Systems. This renovation within the department was a necessary step to improve on the first-rate customer service everybody has experienced and come to expect from our department.

While some of the Sailor's were working on the last details for their spaces, such as putting back the picture boards on the Ceremonial p-way, labeling the spaces, pipes and putting back all the equipment. Other sailors were hard at work, cloning, testing and making sure that all of the computers were working properly for the entire command.

Other Sailor's were involved in the upbringing of their new servers, installing all of the proper software, testing and troubleshooting the networks and making sure that everything was working properly prior to Seventh Fleet staff moving back onboard. They also added a new stronger system security, making it easier to monitor the networks. This was the greatest challenge the Communications Department ever encountered, since this was a new operating system, Microsoft Windows 2000. Communications Department Sailor's worked hand in hand with Civilian technicians, who were there to provide assistance and give them training on how to troubleshoot and fix any problems that they may encounter with the Network/Servers. Bravo Zulu to the Communications Department Sailor's who did an outstanding job on getting everything ready and working.



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On September 14th Seventh Fleet staff move back onboard, and the Communications Department Sailor's work hard and exhausting long hours making sure that all of the computers and printers were put in the network, loading software applications to multiple computers, setting up profiles and troubleshooting any network problems that arise on the daily basis, making sure all the proper message traffic was coming in correctly, and also maintaining the communication circuits. Communications Department would like to thank Seventh Fleet Staff and Blue Ridge personnel, for their patience, understanding and the support provided while getting the Network online.



On October 25th, we got underway and went to places like, Sasebo, Okinawa, Saipan and Guam. Where we were able to relax, have fun, sample different types of local food and we were able to appreciate the local culture. This was the first underway for some of us and even though we were excited to visit different places; we had a very busy schedule. The Communications Department Sailor's were very active not only accomplishing their daily missions/task but also participating in Repair Lockers, practicing damage control measures, and getting their DC, 3M and in-rate qualifications done.

Saipan was definitely one of the best ports for some of the Communications Department Sailor's who received the good news of their advancement to a higher pay grade. Congratulations to the following personnel that were selected for advancement.

1st Class Selectee: IT1 Porcelli.
2nd Class Selectees: IT2 Burden, IT2 Crew, IT2 Franco, IT2 Hentley, IT2 Kendle, IT2 Kolbo, IT2 Kroschell, IT2 Perez and IT2 Thompson.
3rd Class Selectees: IT3 Abalos, IT3 Crawford, IT3 Fisher, IT3 Reed, IT3 Saim and IT3 Whitmore,

In December Communications Department was directly involved in exercise TERMINAL FURY 05. This exercise flexed all of C4I systems to support ADM Doran (CPF) and his joint staff of 400 personnel. The exercise was a direct success as we ensured 99 percent C4I connectivity and reliability throughout this 10 day exercise.

Communications Department hosted the following re-enlistments between September and December: ITCM Morales, IT1 Porcelli, IT2 Brown, L., IT2 Oney, IT2 Udoh, and IT2 Bullock.



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The year 2004 was one of the best years for the Communications Department, many of its Sailor's achieved their Enlisted Surface Warfare Specialist (ESWS) qualification. 2 Communications Department Sailor's were selected as Junior Sailor of the Quarter, IT2 Kendle (First Quarter) and IT2 Nguyen (Second quarter). IT2 Richard Kendle was selected as the Junior Sailor of the Year for 2004.

Congratulations on your achievement!!!

As we enter the New Year, 2005 we can only wonder what this year holds in store for us and what type of challenges we will be face with, however we are more than prepared to take on any new challenges. We look forward to a new exciting and promising year.

Operations Department

The Operations Department along with the rest of the Blue Ridge team has undergone and completed a major overhaul period, DSRA. This DSRA has allowed for the preservation and improvement of spaces throughout the ship. Specifically, the installation of new equipment within the Combat Information Center has assisted in improving the OS's ability to track surface contacts, correlate with the navigation team, and communicate effectively with the bridge watch team. This new equipment included the NAVSSI as well as the new surface search Furuno display.

The Operations Department has pulled together since the completion of DSRA in organizing ships movements and activities. We successfully completed a month of sea trials to ensure all of the ships equipment is functioning properly after DSRA. During the last leg of the underway we also hosted several members of the Afloat Training Group Western Pacific, Yokosuka Detachment in order to assess the completion of the first phase of a three month training phase, CART II, which tested our knowledge and war fighting skills in defending our ship against enemy threats. One of the criteria within the ATG assessment is the EW Operators and EW Supervisors must obtain an average above 80% for Battle "E" award eligibility. We obtained an overall 95.59% average. This was accomplished on the first try making Blue Ridge the first ship in the FNDF to accomplish this and only the third in the Pacific Fleet. However, Blue Ridge is the only ship in the PACFLT to EVER achieve an average in the 90s on the first attempt. The OS' and the Combat Information Center displayed their necessity as the nerve center of the ship and succeeded in every aspect when opposed by simulated enemy threats. We exceeded performance expectations and passed with flying colors!

As a Department we have had a quarter filled with many successes and accomplishments even as we have endured the departure of key personnel in pursuit of furthering their careers in the military. Navigation Division bid farewell to their division officer, LT Ham to ATG, as well as their leading petty officer, QM1(SW) Hatcher to Great Lakes. OW Division bid farewell to CTTCS Branstetter to the USS Stomp as well as CTT2 Fly to the Naval Security Group Activity Denver, CO. OI Division bid



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farewell to OS3 Green who continued on to OS "A" school, OS3 Rodriguez to Bahrain, and OS2 Edora to Diego Garcia. We also bid farewell to OS2 Tucker, OS3 Towles, and OS3 Moraza who served their country with honor and decided to pursue a career in the civilian world. We have also had several new additions to the Blue Ridge Operations Department. Joining the Navigation Division is LTJG Frank from the USS Fitzgerald (DDG 62) who has assumed the challenging role as Navigator. She has already proven to be an asset to the Department in leading the Navigation team in completing the ISIC Navigation Certification on her first day underway as the Blue Ridge Navigator. OW Division recently welcomed CTTC White arriving from FTSC LANT Mayport, FL. OI Division welcomes OSSA Foote and OSSN Wood from OS "A" School as well as OS3 Layman joining us from the USS Kitty Hawk (CV-63).



We would like to congratulate the following personnel for their advancement. CTT2 Rodzewicz, OS2 Parker, QM2 Belanger, QM2 Slack, and QM2 Lee all advanced to Second Class Petty Officer during the September advancement exam cycle. In addition, QM3 Granlund, QM3 Brittell, and QM3 Lunneborg all advanced to Third Class Petty Officer during the September advancement exam cycle. OS3 Isbell, OS3 Crawford and OS3 Holder advanced to the ranks of Petty Officer Third Class for finishing in the top 10 percent of their OS "A" school class, qualifying them for the accelerated advancement program that allowed them to advance and to obligate a 1-year extension in the Navy.

The Operations Department would like to recognize and congratulate OW Division's Leading Petty Officer, CTT1 Williams, on his selection as Blue Ridge Senior Sailor of the Year. He is a great representative of the commitment and exemplary work ethic of the department. CTT1 Williams, we appreciate your hard work and all of your efforts!

Members of the Operations Department have not only excelled in their work aboard ship, but also in their extracurricular activities. Congratulations to our winning team in the COMSEVENTHFLT/USS BLUE RIDGE annual golf tournament held at Atsugi Naval Air Station golf course in August, which included LCDR Juhl (Operations Officer), OSC(SW) Still (OI Division Leading Chief Petty Officer), OS1(SW) Ussery (OI Division Leading Petty Officer), as well as an outsider from the Operations Department, EMC(SW) Guerrero. Well Done!

As we prepare for the commencement of a challenging deployment we have been focusing on training to ensure a successful underway. Specifically with the Navigation Division, since the merger of the Quartermaster and Signaller rates, much time and effort has been devoted to training. Everyone within the Department is also studiously preparing for the upcoming advancement exam in March. In addition to personal and professional goals we will be responsible for safely navigating Blue Ridge in and out of nearly ten foreign ports in only 67 days. We look forward to the future and sharing our experiences in the up-coming deployment. The future will certainly bring many challenges, but the Operations Department is prepared to meet them! Fair Winds and Following Seas.



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Medical Dental Department



The Medical & Dental department has remained fully engaged over the holidays to maintain our high level of Force Health Readiness and encourage our sailors to make healthy choices. We supported the Great American Smoke out by providing general information and encouraging tobacco cessation and we embarked a dietician from the hospital for our last underway period. We also were able to update everyone's immunizations and we know that the crew loves it when we do that!!! We have been busily planning and executing our share of the training cycle, teaching the crew about first aid and CPR. Additionally, just after DSRA, following the lead of many of the facilities in Naval Medicine – the Medical and Dental departments formally combined into one department.

Hails: HMC (FMF) Malone; HM2 Heinze; HM3 Santos; HN Montoyaamaya; HN Drake; DN Ordonez

Farewells: HM3 (SW) Duran; HM3 (SW) Solon; HM3 (SW) Montgomery; HM2 (SW) Filer; HM2 (SW) Alvarado

Promotions: HM3 Clayton Smith; DT3 Christopher Lee; HM2 Eric Heinze





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Administration Department

Since the transition from an arduous DSRA to becoming once again operational as the Flag Ship for the Seventh Fleet, The Administration Department has been very busy ensuring that the crews records are current and up to date in the newly renovated personnel office.

As the Blue Ridge has transitioned out of DSRA, X-2 Division has been highlighting the accomplishments of the crew during our underway period following DSRA. Also, X-2's print shop was extremely busy updating a majority of the labels and tags through out the Blue Ridge.

The Administration Department looks forward to serving the crew of the Blue Ridge in 2005. We look forward to helping our shipmates in the coming year; in addition we look forward to our upcoming winter deployment, and the many exciting places we will have the opportunity to visit.



We would like to welcome our new shipmates:

YN1 Juan Aguilar
YNSR Shauntay Parker
YN3 Roger Engelhardt
YNSA Roderic Whilbysuggs
YNSR James T. Sloan
YNSA Christopher Chason

Fair winds and following seas:

PN1(AW) Geronimo Moso, Jr.
YN2 Henry Cruz
YN2 Zachary Kohlman
LI3 Billy Stringfield

We want to welcome and congratulate the latest additions to the Personnel Family:

PN3 Dominique Cromartie
PNSN Beverly Valles
PNSN Laquite McMillian
PNSN Jeremy Middleton